



February 16th, 2023

Testimony of Laura Hale
American Heart Association

Favorable—SB 259 Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition

Dear Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier and Member of the Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Laura Hale and I am the Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association. The American Heart Association offers our strong support for SB 259.

Keeping Maryland healthy is a drive of the American Heart Association and something that each of you has worked tirelessly to do. Despite the efforts that have been made, the tobacco industry continues to work to addict Maryland's youth to their deadly products: from menthol cigarettes to candy flavored e-cigarettes to everything in between. But today, you have an opportunity to take away one of the things that entice youth to these products: flavors.

Flavors make the addictive nicotine go down easier in these products. 80 percent of teens who use tobacco products started with a flavored product like mint, menthol, or berry¹. Youth are using products such as electronic smoking devices (ESDs), cigarettes, cigars and chewing tobacco². The flavorings in all of these products are appealing to youth and are the reason many initiate use³. By removing the flavored products from the market, youth will no longer be interested in starting to use these products. We will be able to create a generation of never-smokers.

When addressing this issue, it is important to remember the variety of products on the market and not only look at ESDs. The tobacco industry continues to create and market new products to hook Maryland's children. They need new smokers to support their business model. By addicting the next generation to tobacco, they are creating more of a tax burden on Marylanders with the increase in cost for Medicaid as well as the human cost of lives lost each year⁴. If nothing changes, 92,000 kids alive today in Maryland will die prematurely due to tobacco use⁵.

Sales of flavored tobacco products must end in Maryland. The health of our kids can't wait. To protect the health of all Marylanders, Maryland must end the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including ESDs, menthol cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and flavored cigars.

¹ Ambrose, BK, et al., "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014," Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), published online 26 October 2015.

² <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/maryland>

³ https://www.globaltobaccocontrol.org/sites/default/files/state_of_the_evidence_-_flavor_ban_or_restriction_0.pdf

⁴ <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/maryland>

⁵ <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/maryland>